

A Sea Story — ***Maritime Administration's SS Cape Intrepid***

**By Captain Maik Darley, USMS
Master of the SS Cape Intrepid**

Maritime Administration (MARAD) personnel have long enjoyed a special kinship with the mariners who operate our vessels. Captain Darley was the Master of the SS Cape Intrepid during its long voyage in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Captain Darley shares with us some of the special challenges of supporting the global war on terrorism. He is employed by Crowley Liner Services, one of MARAD's ship management companies that operates the Reade Reserve Force.

In January 2003, the SS Cape Intrepid sailed around the world eastbound, passing through both the Panama and Suez Canals. This voyage necessitated advancing the clocks continually throughout the trip, the result being that the crew became one day older by journey's end. The crew of the Intrepid was intent on getting that day back, regardless of the consequences, and in November 2004, they got their chance.

This fine vessel has nearly completed her westbound voyage, wherein the clocks were continually turned back. The homesick ship nears her day of reckoning to complete her 43,099-nautical-mile passage; thereby, successfully circumnavigating the globe twice, in as many years.

This accolade did not come easily, as the vessel was diverted certainly more than once over the 201 days that transpired during the mission. She crossed not only both the International Date Line and the Prime Meridian, but passed over the equator no fewer than

four times this trip. To even the hardened shellbacks*, this is an endeavor worthy of mention, and not to be trifled with by mere pollywogs**, who have never or may never cross the line. I'm talking about an expedition that ranged from just above the Tropic of Capricorn to only 10 degrees of Latitude from the Arctic Circle.



An Army landing craft (foreground) from the 385th Transportation Battalion heads for shore with its cargo as it passes SS Cape Intrepid, one of MARAD's Ready Reserve Force roll-on/roll-off vessels, in Port Townsend Bay, Washington, during Exercise Seahawk '02.

There were but two crew members to complete the trip in its entirety, Mr. Abdulrahmen Alokaish and Mr. Kenneth Hall. One other of the crew, Mr. James Smartt, 78 years young and high man overtime for the unlicensed engine department, had to be dragged off the ship due to a slight medical condition.

Born before the Great Depression, Mr. Smartt was accustomed to hard-ship, and not a word of

complaint or dismay did I hear either from or about him during my tenure. I can only hope that when I reach that great epoch in my lifespan, I can still hit the deck after what would be 61 years at sea, having begun my seafaring career at the ripe old age of 17. We are tired now, and long for our loved ones. And they long for us. To taste, smell, feel, and touch the novelties that beckons us back to the shore, that is our reward. And we will return having known it was a commendable feat that will not go unnoticed.

*Note for Landlubbers: *A shellback is a sailor who has crossed the equator. A shellback is also known as an old sailor who has a vast knowledge of seamanship and who is able to pass on his knowledge. The name also came from being at sea so long seashells grew on the sailor's back.*

***A pollywog is a sailor who has never crossed the equator.*